

# BIG RIVER COALITION



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## Lower Mississippi River (LMR) Dredging Update 7815

Members,

The Corps' Mississippi Valley New Orleans (MVN) solicited a hopper dredge contract on June 23, 2015 and received no bids from the dredging industry. The Corps' Headquarters approved MVN's Red Flag Emergency request to utilize the MVN's hopper dredge WHEELER for 30 days since no industry hopper dredges were available. **MVN is expecting record stage levels for the month of July (15.5 feet or more) and maintaining authorized channel dimensions in Southwest Pass (SWP) will prove challenging.** Forecasts of river stage levels are usually limited to precipitation expected to fall in the next 24 to 48 hours. The storm systems across the basin could indeed raise the forecasted stage levels by one foot (or more) over the next few weeks.

### Lower Mississippi River Stage:

The LMR stage has remained high since mid-March with the last crest of 13.06 feet recorded on the afternoon of Friday, June 12, 2015. The MVN indicated the Carrollton Gauge at New Orleans reading of 14.11 feet at 1300 hours this afternoon (Wednesday, July 8, 2015) with a 24-hour change of +0.16 feet.

**The National Weather Service's 28-day Forecast published today predicts the New Orleans gauge (Carrollton) now cresting at 15.5 feet on or about July 20, 2015 followed by a slow fall. The 28-day Forecast predicts the Carrollton Gauge reading 10.8 feet on August 4, 2015. A crest of 16 feet (or more) remains possible based on actual precipitation across the Mississippi River Basin over the next two weeks.**

The Baton Rouge Gauge had a reading of 36.02 feet at 1400 hours this afternoon, with a 24-hour change of +0.26 feet. The 28-day Forecast now predicts the Baton Rouge Gauge remaining over 29 feet until at least August 4, 2015.

### Navigation Transit Recommendation(s) in Effect at SWP:

The Bar Pilots implemented the flocculation based transit restriction (details below) at 1400 hours on Saturday, June 13, 2015.

**The Associated Branch Pilots of the Port of New Orleans (Bar Pilots) have implemented the following flocculation (slush or fluff) based restriction for all inbound vessels with a draft of 38 feet or greater. Inbound vessels with a freshwater draft of 38 feet or greater can only enter SWP during a 7-hour window. The 7-hour period begins 5 hours prior to high tide as posted on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) website and ends 2 hours after the posted high tide. There are no restrictions for outbound vessels or for inbound vessels with a draft less than 38 feet.**

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## **Industry Hopper Dredge(s) in SWP:**

**NEWPORT:** The NEWPORT began dredging in SWP on June 14, 2015 and is presently dredging from Mile 2.5 Above Head of Passes (AHP) to Mile 1.5 AHP. The NEWPORT is expected to complete this contract on August 28, 2015.

**STUYVESANT:** The industry hopper dredge is presently down for repairs. The dredge arrived in SWP on April 28, 2015 and is now expected to depart SWP on July 15, 2015 after a negotiated contract extension. The contractor expects the dredge to resume dredging operations on July 10, 2015.

## **Government Hopper Dredge(s) in SWP:**

**WHEELER:** The MVN's hopper dredge WHEELER is presently dredging from Mile 3.8 Below Head of Passes (BHP) to Mile 6.6 BHP. The WHEELER completed Readiness Exercise #1-2015 on July 7, 2015 and immediately began dredging under the previously referenced Red Flag Emergency Callout. The WHEELER is expected to continue dredging in SWP under the Red Flag approval until August 5, 2015.

## **Industry Cutterhead Dredge(s) in SWP:**

**ALASKA:** The cutterhead dredge ALASKA is presently dredging on the western side of the channel (right descending bank) at Mile 4.3 AHP. The cutterhead is expected to complete this assignment on July 18, 2015 and then move down to dredge the reach from Mile 9.5 to Mile 11.5 BHP on the eastern channel side (left descending bank). The cutterhead's contract was extended with a revised completion date now expected to be July 29, 2015.

## **Dustpan Dredge(s) on the Crossings Above New Orleans:**

**WALLACE McGEORGE:** The cutterhead dredge WALLACE McGEORGE began dredging at Red Eye Crossing (Mile 224 AHP) on Sunday, June 7, 2015 and then moved to Belmont Crossing (Mile 154 AHP) on Saturday, June 27, 2015. The dustpan dredge is removing material from the central 250 feet of this critical Crossing before the stage levels recede (advanced maintenance).

Sincerely,

*Sean M. Duffy, Sr.*

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